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Sacred Biography.

Sketch of the Character, Conversion, and Apostleship, of Saint Paul.

[Continued from No. 1, page 7.]

WE proposed to exhibit the character of this apostle before he was converted, the circumstances of his conversion, and his subsequent labors and sufferings, or his apostleship.

Having considered the two former conditions of the man, his character as a Jew and a Pharisee, and his change to christianity, we are now to give a brief history of his apostleship.—And we will

I. Exhibit his labors and sufferings; and

II. His manner of writing, and the proof which his apostleship furnishes of the truth and divinity of the scriptures.

I. Let us briefly survey the labors and sufferings of this extraordinary man.

After he received his sight at Damascus, he immediately commenced a new career of life. He conferred not with flesh and blood; that is, he no longer consulted his own ease, emolument, or honor; but began to preach the gospel to the Jews, and many

were converted: but such as were not, determined to murder him, and obtained leave of the governor to watch the city gates, that they might prevent his escape. Apprized of his danger, his friends let him down in a basket from the window of a house that was built on the wall of the city. He went into Arabia, which lay a little south of Damascus, and preached a short time, and then returned again to that city.

After three years, he went up to Jerusalem, and was made known, as a convert, to the other apostles, and received into their fellowship. He preached the gospel at Jerusalem; and it was at that time he fell into a trance, while praying in the temple, and was caught up into the third heaven. In this city he was warned of God that the Jews had laid wait for his life. With some christian brethren, he went down to Cæsarea, and sailed for Tarsus in Cilicia. He preached in what is called Proconsular Asia, in the provinces of Cilicia, Pamphilia, and Pisidia, about five years, and then returned to Antioch in Syria. This was a circuit of several hundred miles. He then went to Cyprus, where Sergius Paulus, the governor, was converted, from which circumstance his name was changed from Saul to Paul.

At Antioch in Pisidia, the Jews stirred up the heathen, and Paul and Barnabas were cast out. At Iconium also, the Jews raised a tumult, and the apostles, in danger of being stoned, went to Lystra and Derbe, in Lycaonia, where the inhabitants would have sacrificed to them as gods; but Paul with great difficulty prevented them. The Jews of Antioch followed them to Lystra, and excited the people against them. Paul was stoned, and dragged out of the city apparently dead; but recovering, he returned to Derbe and preached, and also at Iconium and Antioch.

A dispute arose in these provinces of Asia, about subjecting the Gentile converts to the ceremonial law. On this occasion, Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to confer with the other apostles; and from thence they were sent to Antioch and the adjacent churches, with the result of the council. Here Paul withstood Peter, on account of his dissimulation in refusing to eat with the Gentile converts in presence of the Jews.

After this, Paul, with Silas, determined to visit the churches which had been planted ; and they travelled over the western provinces of Asia, Syria, Cilicia, Lycaonia, Phrygia, and Galatia. By inspecting a map of these provinces, we see that this tour must exceed a thousand miles.

Hitherto our apostle had labored in Asia ; but while at Troas, he was desired by an angel, in the appearance and dress of a man, to go over into Macedonia. A new and wide field for labor was there presented to him ; and new sufferings awaited him. He, with his companion, Silas, sailed from Troas to Samothracia, and thence to Neapolis, and travelled from the latter place to Philippi in Macedonia. Here he could not be less than twelve hundred miles distant from Jerusalem.

At Philippi, Lydia was converted, and received baptism, with her house. Here Paul was whipped, and cast into prison, for having cast out a spirit of divination from a maid. Here the jail was burst open by an earthquake, the jailor converted, and baptized, with his household.

From Philippi they travelled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, to Thessalonica the capital. Here the Jews excited a tumult, and assaulted the house of Jason where Paul lodged. By night he was conducted to Berea, where he preached for a time with better success.—But the Jews of Thessalonica pursued them to Berea, and raised a tumult. Paul withdrew, and left Silas and Timothy to strengthen the new converts.

He travelled to Athens, preached, and combatted the absurd philosophy of the place. Here Dionysius, one of the judges, and Damaris, probably his lady, were converted.

Leaving Athens, he preached at Corinth with great success. He continued at Corinth eighteen months, and established a church, and wrote the epistles to the Thessalonians, who, by his ministry, were formed into a church before. From the same place, he also wrote the epistle to the Galatians, a church which he had planted in Asia.

From Corinth he set sail for Jerusalem, to be there at the feast of Pentecost. He sailed to Ephesus, from thence to Cæsarea, and travelled up to Jerusalem.

On his return from Jerusalem, he took a circuitous course through the northern provinces of Asia, Syria, Galatia, Phrygia, &c. to confirm the churches which he had planted, and came to Ephesus, where he tarried and preached three years. Here a mob was raised against him by Demetrius, a silver-smith, and he was cast to the wild beasts in the theatre, or had to do with men as savage as wild beasts. During his abode at Ephesus, he was informed of disorders in the church at Corinth, and wrote the first epistle to them.

At the end of the three years, he set off for Greece, and arrived at Macedonia. Hearing of the good effects of the first epistle to the Corinthians, he wrote the second. About the same time, and at the same place, he wrote the first epistle to Timothy, and the epistle to Titus. He made the circuit of Greece as far westward as Illiricum; returning by the way of Corinth, he stopped there, and wrote the epistle to the Romans; and having received a contribution from Macedonia and Achaia for the poor saints at Jerusalem, he set sail for the latter place. He called at Ephesus, preached, and in a very affecting speech, foretold the troubles which awaited him in Judea.

He three times visited the western provinces of the Lesser Asia, and twice he travelled through Macedonia and Achaia in Greece, which must have been a journey of not less than fifteen hundred miles from Jerusalem.

He arrived at Jerusalem, after his second tour thro' Greece, much to the satisfaction and comfort of the brethren; but it was no sooner known that he was there, than some of the Jews of Lesser Asia cried for help to apprehend him. He was seized by the mob, and would have been beaten to death, had not Lysias, the Roman captain, come with a guard of soldiers and rescued him. He was conducted to the castle, and on the stairs which led from the temple to the castle he was permitted to address the people, in which he rehearsed his former rage against the chris-

tians, and the manner of his conversion. He was scourged in the castle that night, to make him confess the crime of which he was supposed to be guilty. Next day the Jews bound themselves by a dreadful curse, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had slain him. The knowledge of this plot was communicated to the captain, who contrived to send him next night under a guard to Felix the governor, at Cæsarea. Paul was heard before Felix and Festus, who succeeded to the government of Judea. Festus proposed to him to return to Jerusalem, and be tried there; but he, being aware of the malice of the Jews, appealed to Cæsar. On this he put on board a ship which was sailing to Italy, was wrecked in a violent storm, and cast on the island Melita, now Malta, where he spent the winter. He miracu'ously healed the father of Publius the governor, and the other sick on the island.

After three months, he sailed for Rome. Here he was not put into close confinement, but allowed to live two years in his own hired house, with a soldier that kept him. Always intent on the great object of his mission, he called the Jews together and explained to them his manner of life, and preached the gospel to the conviction of some of them. He received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here ends the history of Paul, as we have it in the Acts, but it appears from some of the epistles, that this was not the only visit which he made to Rome. He was set at liberty, and afterwards visited Macedonia, if not Spain. He was conducted again to Rome, and his imprisonment contributed to the spread of the gospel; for he was an instrument in the conversion of some among Cæsar's household.

There was a tradition among the primitive christians, that having, by his preaching, converted one of Nero's favorite concubines, the emperor was so enraged that he ordered him to be beheaded.

At Rome, he wrote the epistles to the Ephesians, II. Timothy, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and Hebrews.

He was the most active and indefatigable preacher of the gospel that ever lived. He performed the greatest labors, and experienced a greater variety of perils, than any man ever did before or since, in such a cause. He endured hunger, thirst, nakedness, cold, fasting, and watching. Five times he was beaten of the Jews, and twice by order of heathen magistrates. At Lystra, he was supposed to be beaten to death with stones. Three times, he had suffered shipwreck; and it seems, that for a whole day and night he had struggled w th the waves of the sea, perhaps in an open boat.

As every man is governed by some motive, Paul must have had some powerful motive to prompt him to perform such labors, surmount such obstacles, and endure such sufferings. He tells us what was the moving principle—Love to Christ. "The love of Christ constraineth us." He counted not his own life dear, if he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

AUGUSTINE.

[*To be continued.*]

Communications.

Letters to a Brother, on Parental Duties.

[Continued from No. 4 Vol. I.—page 111.]

LETTER III.

DEAR BROTHER,

I HAVE been aware that you might think, either that your son does not need renewing grace, or that you can do nothing to communicate this grace, and so rest easy in the neglect of duty.

But how can you plead that your child does not need renewing grace? Can you believe that it is pure and holy, and in *no need* of Christ's salvation? Your

child has descended from fallen, sinful parents. Although it may not be to blame for their wickedness; yet it possesses, by divine constitution, their depraved nature. Adam, in his fallen state, begat a son in his own likeness. None can bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Your child belongs to this apostate world, that lieth in wickedness. How then can it otherwise be, but that it needs sanctifying grace? Without this grace, no one can be saved. Christ has not, by his death, removed original sin, or the effects of the original apostacy, so that infants are pure and holy, before regeneration. This change is absolutely necessary for all. There is no exception. Christ's having died to expiate human guilt, does not in the least set aside the necessity of the renewing of the Holy Ghost. This change is as necessary, even for an infant, as though Christ had not died. His atonement is one thing; his renewing grace is another. These are distinct. The atonement does nothing of itself to alter a person's real character. Your son is, by nature, as really depraved and sinful, as though the atonement had never been made; and he will remain so, until he is made a new creature by sanctifying grace. Without this change, no one, whether an infant or adult, can be so interested in Christ, as to have redemption through his blood.

Can you suppose, will you maintain, my brother, that a part of mankind have no need of God's special grace? Can you find such a sentiment any where in the Bible? To quote, in the manner some do, the apostle's words, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," is nothing to the purpose. For the apostle is there expressly treating of the future resurrection, and especially of the resurrection of believers, of those who are in Christ by faith, and have his Spirit dwelling in them. All these will come forth to the resurrection of life, by virtue of their union with Christ. See Rom. viii. 1, 11. And if those, who die in infancy, are raised up to glory, it must be through Christ. For the gospel reveals but one way, for any of our race to go to heaven. Hence if infants are saved, it must be through Christ; and

hence they must be in a sinful and lost state. For Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost; he came to save sinners; none but sinners can be saved by him; and all those whom he conducts to heaven, are saved from endless perdition. And they are all saved "*by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*"

You hope God will be merciful to your little son. But the very idea of mercy implies that it is shewn to sinners, to those who justly deserve to perish forever. The pure and holy, who have never sinned, do not need *mercy* at God's hands; for they deserve no evil. Those who are not sinners, he will not treat as such. But how does he treat infants? Does he not visit them with pain and distress, and cut them down by death? Would they be thus visited, if they were pure and holy? According to the apostle, "Death passes upon all, for that all have sinned."

You are inclined, perhaps, to suppose, that your son is not sinful, and does not need renewing grace, because you cannot see his heart. You look on the outward appearance. God looketh on the heart. He discerns sin, or moral impurity, where we cannot. There is much sin in the heart of every person, which we cannot discover. But it is all perfectly known to God. He sees in the infant a corrupt fountain, which will send forth streams of iniquity, except it be purified by his grace. "*The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. From within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.*" The seed of these abominations exists by nature, in the heart of every one of our race. Hence Christ says, "Except a man," (or, as it is in the original) "Except *any one* be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*" Your son has been born of the flesh; he must be born of the Spirit, or he can never be holy so as to dwell in heaven.

I well know you cannot give renewing grace to your child. You are not required to do it. You are required to live a strictly pious life; and faithfully use God's appointed means for your child's salvation. To this end, you must be found in Christ, and be stedfast in God's covenant; you must in faith dedicate your offspring to God, be fervent and frequent in prayer for their salvation, and faithfully teach and command them to love and obey the Lord in all things. But your success depends wholly on the divine blessing. It is with your endeavors, as it is with the labors of ministers. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God giveth the increase." God must bless what you do, or your child will never be converted. The most faithful discharge of duty will be ineffectual, without God's special grace.

May God give you, dear brother, a right understanding in these things, and incline your heart to that which is pleasing in his sight, for his Son's sake.

PHILO.

[*To be continued.*]

THE OBSERVER—No. III.

I AROSE early upon the Lord's day. The weather was serene, and the sky without a cloud. All nature smiled, and invited man to contemplate the wonderful works of his Creator. Reason and scripture, love and gratitude, unitedly urge him to devote this day to the special honor of Him, whose mercy causeth the sun to rise upon the evil and the good; and to the honor of Him who died for sinners, and rose again for their justification.

I said, what a delightsome day is this, for the servants of God to convene in his earthly courts, and inquire in his holy temple! A thought struck my mind, How transporting would be the sight, to behold the highways crowded with multitudes of true worshippers, with their faces towards Zion! old and young, high and low, rich and poor, saying one to

another, *Come and let us go up to the house of the Lord, that we may sit under his shadow with great delight; and his fruit shall be sweet unto our taste!* I exclaimed with rapture, O my God, is not the day near at hand when greater things than these shall be perfectly realized! When we shall behold the little houses, now not half filled, removed, and spacious temples erected in their room, to accommodate thousands, who will worship God in spirit and in truth!

What zeal and heavenly love will then animate the preachers of the gospel, and add life and efficacy to their doctrines! What attentive ears, what obedient hearts, what hungering and thirsting after the words of eternal life, are manifest among the hearers! What heavenly charity and holy fellowship will burn in every breast! I evidently see that the New Jerusalem will then come down to earth.

While I was thus musing, and delighting myself with the business and blessedness of God's holy day, I was suddenly interrupted by the bleating of sheep, lowing of oxen, prancing of horses, and rumbling of wheels. I stepped to my window, that I might observe what was passing without. And, lo! the highways were all in motion with traffickers, and various other descriptions of men, pursuing their labors and recreations, which are strictly forbidden on this holy day.—There were droves of horned cattle and sheep hurried on to the slaughter.—There were carriages of burden deeply laden with the luxuries of life, to feed the lusts, and intoxicate the passions of depraved man.—There were carriages of pleasure briskly passing and repassing; within were passengers of different descriptions. There I saw the sordid miser, and the man of pleasure; the infidel philosopher, and the gay and thoughtless youth. In a word, there was the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the master and the servant, the ruler and the subject, united in this ungodly combination, to break over all restraint, and trample on the authority of God and man. I saw, that, with one accord, they had set their faces against the heavens. *They have taken counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.*

I was pained and greatly distressed, on considering the rapid increase of sabbath-breakers. What was passing brought to my mind another heinous crime, which prevails in our land; that is, a solemn trifling with official oaths. I considered how many have lifted up their hand to Heaven, and sworn by Him that liveth forever and ever, that they would support the laws, which respect the right observation of the Sabbath, to the best of their abilities. But, notwithstanding this solemn appeal to Heaven, they will directly give license to travellers, when they must know the only object is to evade the true meaning of the law. In other instances, they will turn their back, or shut their eyes, upon the most flagrant transgressions; and thus the guilty continually pass with impunity. I said, this trifling with oaths, is, in the most criminal manner, taking the name of God in vain.

Thus our morals are ruined, government is subverted, society is convulsed, and multitudes are hurried on to swift destruction.—*Will not God visit for these things? Will not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*—Surely, *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble. The wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder thereof he will restrain.* This is the hope, and this the consolation, of every good man.

OBSERVER.

Letter from a person, now deceased, to her Sister, on fashionable amusements.

DEC. 26, 1800.

Dear Sister,

AS I cannot see you, I take my pen that I may unbosom my sorrow. In how many ways do I dishonor the Redeemer, bring a stigma on the holy religion I profess, and join the adversary in destroying precious souls! I have been reflecting on a part of my conduct, which I frequently think of with regret. The particular to which I refer, is my having coun-

tenanced, approved, and even vindicated, the amusement of dancing or ball-assemblies.

You very well know the arguments which I used, to encourage you to attend—that it might have a tendency to prevent religion's being unjustly reproached and censured, as making persons unsociable and forbidding in their deportment; and that by being more conversant with young people, you might have greater advantage to recommend to them the religion which you so highly esteem. But O what a subtle adversary is satan! It seems as though he transformed himself into an angel of light, and I wickedly listened, so as to be led away by his crafty reasoning. When shall I be rid of my wicked heart, which has so often harbored the enemy of my Lord! I long to be made an instrument of repairing, in some way, the injury I have done. How cautious ought professors to be, lest they cast stumbling blocks before others! How often it is said by inconsiderate youth, "Professors of religion countenance, and sometimes attend, and what can be the harm if I attend a scene of innocent mirth?" not considering that they should make the word of God the rule of their conduct. That teaches us to live holy lives, and do all to the glory of God.

It is truly lamentable, that those who profess religion, live no more agreeable to this rule. As I observed, the term *innocent* is used. But can any action be deemed strictly innocent, which has not the glory of God for its object? Besides, let us reflect a moment on the consequences of such *sinful* mirth, as it ought to be called. A little time is allotted us to prepare for eternity. Does this mirth have any tendency to bring us to serious consideration? Certainly not; but it naturally tends to wear off conviction, and harden in sin.

When I consider the total depravity of the human heart, and that all in a state of nature are wholly unprepared for heaven; how distressing it is to see so many amiable youth engaged in vain and trifling amusements, and dancing on the brink of eternal ruin, liable every moment to sink into endless misery! And they will eternally perish, if God, in his sovereign mercy, does not convince them of their exceeding sin-

fulness, and cause them to know and embrace the Savior. Let all those who have obtained mercy, adore and praise that sovereign God, who has made them to differ.

Dear Sister, I do not write this letter, because I think I have need to use arguments with you; for I know you are convinced by experience of the sinfulness of this mirth. I wish we may strengthen and assist each other. I wish to acknowledge my error and wickedness. How exceedingly was I blinded! I recollect I retired and prayed for you, after you were gone; and would have persuaded myself that you were doing right. But, alas! here was my mistake—I did not go humbly and fervently to the throne of grace to seek the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, before I gave my opinion. What weak, sinful creatures we are, when left to ourselves, exposed to every error!

O sister, live near the throne of grace. Constantly feel your dependence. When we are weak, then we are strong. God is our fortress and our tower. He will be our strength, if we sincerely put our trust in him. Go on in the christian life. Wait on the Lord, and he will strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord.

Your affectionate sister, T. C.

Selections.

[We delay the publication of some important matter, to make room for the following seasonable and excellent ADDRESS to the Churches, by the General Association of Connecticut. Though the Address, which we now introduce, is long, we think every sentence is worthy of the perusal and the serious attention of every one who has professed Christ.] EDITORS.

An Address of the General Association of Connecticut, to the Congregational Ministers and Churches of the State, on the importance of united endeavors to revive Gospel Discipline.

REVEREND AND BELOVED,

THE General Association, in addressing you, assume no authoritative or juridical right over you; nor do they expect to suggest any new ideas on the subject

of evangelical discipline: but, as brethren in the common faith, they would attempt "to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" of the duties which you owe to the interests of Zion.

"The free circulation of the blood, and the proper discharge of all the animal functions, are not more necessary to the health of the body, than the discipline, which Christ has instituted, to the spiritual health and prosperity of his body, the church." Every particular church is as "a city, set on a hill, which cannot be hid." It is a "spectacle to the world, to angels, and to man." Those who are without, will judge of the christian religion by the conduct of its professors. It is therefore of high importance, as it respects the honor of God our Saviour, and the advancement and glory of his spiritual kingdom, that his religion, as exhibited in the example of his professed friends, should be commended to every man's conscience in the sight of God. If the discipline of Christ's church is grossly neglected, his enemies will hiss, and wag their heads in derision and contempt, saying, "Is this the city, which men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth!"

No visible society of professing christians can appear "comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners," any farther than its members are careful to preserve the purity of christian doctrine and practice, by maintaining that wholesome discipline, for which Christ has given them authority and commandment. To a prevalent neglect of this discipline, we must ascribe many of the difficulties which are found in our churches; difficulties by which the beauty of Zion is marred, and the blessed Redeemer is daily wounded in the house of his friends. Until a sincere and united attempt is made to remedy these evils, we must be deeply guilty of unfaithfulness to our divine Master, and to the souls for which he died.

As means, under the divine blessing, of reviving primitive christian discipline in the churches, and of promoting the glory of the Redeemer, in their spiritual edification, we recommend and urge the following things:—

That due care be exercised in the admission of members to communion in our churches. From the neglect of this, arise many occasions of discipline, and many obstacles to its faithful execution. Although God alone can judge the hearts of men, yet none should be encouraged to enter our churches, but such as profess their faith in Christ, and, in the judgment of charity, are christians. Christ says, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Unsanctified persons know not how to govern, nor can they be governed, by gospel principles. They cannot feel the force of gospel motives, and of course cannot confess Christ before men, with any reasonable hope of witnessing a good confession, or of so demeaning themselves, on all occasions, as not to bring reproach on that sacred name, by which they are called. If they outwardly respect Christ's commandments, it will be only from interested and unholy motives; and when hardly pressed with temptation, they will be sure to break through such feeble restraints, and bring dishonor on religion. Vows will not bind those who do not love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. However regular and circumspect their general deportment, they will always be liable, from a want of that "charity which seeketh not her own," to depart from Christ's commandments; and show, by incontestible signs, that their hearts are not right with God.

Besides, when such as are christians only in name, and profession, fall into censurable wickedness, they will very impatiently endure the discipline which is divinely instituted for reclaiming offenders. Governed only by a regard to private interest and reputation, graceless professors will, with extreme reluctance, be brought to make such retractions and acknowledgments as will wipe away the scandal in the eyes of the world. But this is not all:—When churches are composed of members who have only the form without the power of godliness, it must needs be, not only that offences will come, but that the discipline, which the gospel requires to be exercised toward the offenders, will be wholly neglected. Unrenewed men feel none of those obligations which bind the real disciple to his Master,

and the interests of his kingdom. Hence they will naturally find excuses for their offending brethren, and neglect to do their duty to them, from a secret hope, that their own offences will be treated with the more indulgence, when *they* trespass.

By a few members of this character, a whole church may be embarrassed and frustrated in attempting to reclaim one who has sinned. It is an obvious truth, therefore, that one of the best preventives of an evil, so great, and so justly lamented, must be furnished, by giving due instructions respecting the qualifications which Christ requires of those who unite with his visible family, and by due care on the part of the pastors and the churches, to receive none but those who appear to be the real disciples of Jesus.

To prevent occasions for discipline, and the many evils which always result from a neglect of it, we exhort the members of the churches to be circumspect, watchful, and prayerful.

They should often call to remembrance the solemn engagements, by which they have bound themselves to depart from all iniquity; feel their high relation to Christ, as the subjects of his visible kingdom, and their indispensable obligations to commend his religion to the consciences of men, and to avoid bringing it into reproach in the eyes of the world. With the ignorant or superficially informed, the wicked example of a single professor, often casts an odium on all, who bear the name of Christ, and suggests doubts as to the divine origin of his religion. How important, then, that christians should "shine as lights," that those may be silenced and ashamed, who seek for occasion to heap reproach and scandal on the christian name. Were all professing christians solicitous to be holy, and without blame, christianity wou'd live in the consciences, though still excluded from the hearts, of the impenitent. Depraved as the world is, it would be constrained to take knowledge of professors, that they had been with Jesus; that they had imbibed his spirit; and that there was no occasion for saying to them, "*What do ye more than others?*" In view of this, we entreat you, brethren, to watch over one another, to pray one for another, and to exhort and ad-

monish one another. Do this, and censurable immoralities and gross heresies would not only be few, and the offenders more easily reclaimed; but all would more cheerfully and strictly obey the divine direction, to "shun the very appearance of evil." "A watchful eye upon the state of the church, and of particular members, with seasonable interposition, may do more towards the preservation of good order, than all other things put together. Discourage whisperings, backbitings, and jealousies. Frown on talebearers, and give no ear to their tales. Nip contention in the bud. Adjust differences in civil matters, [so far as possible,] among yourselves. Bring together, at an early period, those, in whom misconception and distrust have begun to operate, ere ill opinion ripen into settled dislike. By frank and timely explanation, in the presence of a common friend, *that* may be healed in an hour, which, if permitted to proceed, a series of years cannot eradicate. Be affectionately free with one another. Give tender and faithful hints, when it appears to you, that one of your brethren is in danger of being drawn aside from the principles or spirit of the gospel. Let all be given, from their first entering into communion with you, to expect them. If any one take offence at such treatment, give him to understand, that he, who cannot endure a caution or reproof, is unfit for christian society, and is in the utmost danger of falling into mischief."

Whenever there is occasion for a regular process against an offender, the rule which is given in the 18th chapter of the gospel according to St. Matthew, is *perfect*, and sacredly and invariably binding: "*If thy brother*," &c. If any member of a church commit an offence, which is known to but one of his brethren, and to no other persons, who can be witnesses to the offence; such brother is bound to tell him his fault *privately*, and to take the best measures to bring him to repentance. But if unsuccessful, instead of proceeding as in other cases, he must, through want of evidence, refer the final trial to the great day, in which every work shall be brought into judgment, with every secret thing. But the rule before cited, is intended for all cases, which may occur, under such circum-

stances, that evidence can be obtained to convict the offender, whether the offence be more privately committed, or in the most public manner. A rule, so completely adapted to every possible case, cannot be devised by the wisdom and benevolence of men. If the offence be ever so public, no other measures can be conceived, so perfectly suited to convince and reclaim the offender, as for one suitable person to go and tell him his fault, in private, and labor with christian tenderness to touch his conscience, and lead him to make the requisite satisfaction. This method is much more likely to convince and gain the offender, than criminating him, by the first step, before a public tribunal. Citing him before a public tribunal, without the previous steps, would tend to call into repulsive operation the strong passions of pride and shame, and thus render him obstinate and irreclaimable. Whereas keeping close to the mild gospel rule, would give the offender the fairest opportunity for serious reflection, and for offering satisfaction, without the appearance of its being extorted: and a multitude of painful circumstances, which must attend a public investigation and trial before the church, would be avoided. If the first or the second step be successful, all the ends of discipline are answered; but if not, the offence will be presented to the cognizance of the church, in the best way which can be conceived. Let the delinquent have suitable time to prepare for his defence. Let the accusation be definitely stated in writing. And if, after a full hearing, there should not be unanimity on the question of guilty or not guilty, minorities must acquiesce in the opinion of majorities, and on no account ever speak slanderously of the church's proceedings behind their backs, and before an ungodly world.

The want of a proper christian temper, however, in the prosecutor, often defeats all the good intentions of this plain rule of duty in the family of Christ. We therefore most earnestly exhort every brother, who would undertake a course of christian discipline, carefully and prayerfully to remove the beam out of his own eye, before he attempts to pull the mote out of the eye of his brother. Let the spirit of Christ guide in the whole procedure. Let candor, moderation, and

gentleness, be joined with patience, long-suffering, and prudence; and all be done with an earnest aim to promote the good of the offender, the glory of God, and the edification of the church. Without this spirit, discipline is worse than omitted: it is but a *quarrel*, originating in carnal affections, and invariably makes bad worse, by spreading the leaven of malice, contention, and strife, through the whole community.

As the sentence of excommunication becomes exceedingly dreadful, when ratified by the Great Head of the church; we must not suppose, that the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" are committed to any church, where, during the procedure, there is not solemn and earnest prayer, much deep humiliation, and mourning for sin, by all the members; and where the body have not deep impression of their own approaching appearance before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, together with a meek, forgiving and compassionate temper towards the offender. Remember, christian brethren, that, in all these things, the *manner* is often no less important than the *matter*, in gaining the ends of this institution.

We would by no means countenance the modern opinion, falsely called liberal, which considers heretics and covenant-breakers as not amenable to the authority of the church. By a heretic, we mean one who obstinately adheres to some essential error, subversive of the atonement by Christ, or rendering his cross "of none effect." St. Paul classes heresies with works of the flesh, as excluding from the kingdom of God.—Those who pretended that men's obedience to the moral or ceremonial law, was the ground of their justification before God, were objects of his pointed reprobation; and Hymeneus and Philetus were severely censured for denying the resurrection of the dead.—St. Peter speaks of those who shall "privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."—Ought doctrines, stamped with such a character, by the unerring decision of the Holy Ghost, to be viewed as harmless in the church of Christ? Can any one be sound in the faith, while embracing a *damnable heresy?* or innocent, when denying the Lord that bought him?

or safe, in the way to swift destruction?—It appears to us, that St. John's gospel, and much of his first epistle, were directed against those who denied the divinity, personality, and Messiahship of Christ. And, in condemning the heresy of the Nicolaitans, and of Jezebel, he plainly teaches, that all doctrines, tending to more ungodliness, and encouraging fleshly lusts, ought to be hated, avoided, and purged from the church. Such as cannot be reclaimed from essential errors, after a first and second admonition, we conceive are to be rejected, as having invalidated their own profession, and forfeited their standing as visible christians. "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" We earnestly beseech the churches, in such cases, not to be drawn aside from their duty, through the cunning craftiness of those, who, "by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple." There is a prudence that dwells with wisdom; but there is also a worldly, time-serving prudence, which has no affinity to that heaven-born grace. The loss of members from our churches, by desertion, ought, in no measure, to deter the followers of Christ from the straight path of his commandments. Better is it that the church should be a small select band, cemented by ardent love to their Master and his interest, than the discordant multitude, without harmony of sentiment and affection. The three hundred that lapped under Gideon, the type of Christ, were more potent than the mighty host of Midian and Amalek. Union is the strength and beauty of our Zion. *Union*, not *numbers*, will make her "terrible as an army with banners."

In this connexion, we deem it worthy of consideration, whether the sin of *covenant-breaking* be not too little regarded in our churches. A person, not chargeable with gross heresy or scandal, sometimes forsakes the worship and communion of the church, with which he had covenanted to walk. In such a case, the violation of his engagements does, by no means, absolve his brethren from theirs. The breach of *his* vows renders the obligation of *theirs* not the less solemn and indispensable; nor can he be properly given up as ir-

reclaimable, until every attempt to convince and reclaim him shall have proved ineffectual.

The care of baptized children and youth is a matter of too serious importance to be forgotten in this address. The prevalent neglect, in our churches, of a duty, so great and obvious, ought to excite the deep concern of all, who love the welfare of Zion. "Perhaps there is no obligation disregarded with less remorse, or more fatal effects, than that of bringing up youth in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." Christian families are as certainly the nurseries of the church upon earth, as she is herself the nursery of the church in heaven. Nor is there a more alarming symptom of her condition, than the few, the very few, who tread in the steps of their religious parents. Old christians are dying off, and a proportionable number of young ones do not step forward to occupy their stations. Wo to that generation, by which the testimony of God shall be abandoned!—But wo also to that generation, which is preparing the "seed of evil doers," that shall perform the accursed work! They who now fill the christian church, ought to tremble, lest at their doors should be laid the guilt of rearing an infidel progeny; and at their hands be required the blood of sons and daughters to be born in ages to come. If any thing vigorous is to be expected in remedying the evil, christians must pause. They must ask, whether or not they do right in coveting for their offspring that friendship of the world "which is enmity with God:" whether they can now excuse themselves to their consciences, or will hereafter stand blameless before their Judge, for their unfaithfulness to the children "whom he hath given them;" for their connivance at those profligate habits, which are carrying pestilence into the bosom of domestic society; for the pitiable and criminal vanity of qualifying their boys and their girls for entering with applause into that very *world*, from which the voice of their God has enjoined them and theirs to "come out and be separate," they hope to be acknowledged by him as his "sons and daughters."

We exhort the churches to think on this subject; to *think* on it with a serious, prayerful attention, correspondent with its immense importance. The most

plausible objections of those who deny the divine rite of infant baptism, are furnished by our criminal inattention to such as have bee. solemnly dedicated to God. If we do not all believe that the promises to faithful parents are absolute, we all agree that they afford the greatest encouragement: we all agree, that our vows of allegiance to Christ bind us to admonish parents that are unfaithful; and that, in some important sense, the care and authority of the church extend to the children of all who are themselves in covenant. The neglect of these duties, as it mars the honor, hinders the prosperity, and hazards the safety, of the church, is indeed a criminal neglect. As it endangers the souls of the rising generation, beset, in this day, with the prevailing temptations of error and ungodliness, it is no less *cruel* than criminal.

To promote greater attention to the religious education of baptized children, we beg leave to recommend the following things:—

That christian parents endeavor to give their children every practicable advantage to become capable of reading the Bible, and of repeating the Assembly's Catechism, as early as possible—

That they spend at least one hour with them every Sabbath, in prayer, catechising, and familiar instruction in the doctrines and duties of religion—

That they teach them to sanctify the Lord's day, by a stated and serious attendance on public worship, reading the Scriptures, and such other exercises as are proper for holy time—

That they require them to attend public catechisings till they are fourteen years of age; and thenceforward, daring their minority, to attend seasons that may be appointed by their pastor for the religious instruction of youth—

That they restrain them from going into irregular and vicious company, and places of dangerous resort, and from being abroad unseasonably, and especially on the evening of the Sabbath—

That they train them up in the habitual recollection of their solemn dedication to God, of the relation which they bear to his church, and the peculiar obliga-

tions which they are under in due time personally and publicly to own Christ.

We recommend, that every church appoint the deacons, or some other meet persons, as a committee, to assist the pastor in public catechising, and in such family visits as may be agreed upon, for the purpose of inquiry into the state of baptized children, and of urging their parents to faithfulness. The same persons, with their pastor, may properly be considered as special guardians of orphan baptized children, so far at least as to place them, if possible, under the care of christian families. The gratuitous distribution of religious tracts, adapted to the capacities of children, may be productive of important benefits.

But as the success of all human endeavors depends on a divine blessing, that blessing should be sought, in earnest, frequent, and united prayer. We propose, that in each church the stated sacramental lecture should be considered as a season for such prayer. In conformity with the example of God's people, mentioned in the 29th chapter of Deuteronomy, let professing parents on that occasion stand before the Lord, with their "little ones;" and while they renew and ratify their own covenant vows, let the whole church present an offering of solemn prayer for their children.

In cases of public offence, especially, we entreat our brethren to consider the mischiefs arising from *improper delay* in executing the laws of Christ. To avoid evils so likely to happen, we beg leave to repeat the advice of this body to the churches in 1774:—"That each church choose a small number of the brethren, as a committee of inspection, inquiry, and information, to meet with, or by the direction of, the pastor; who, upon hearing any thing of any of their members, which is apprehended to be matter of public scandal and church censure, are to consider themselves as under obligations to make inquiry, examine evidences, and proceed with such offenders according to the laws of Christ's kingdom."

When a professor has been guilty of a public and scandalous offence, we think that scriptural satisfaction implies a *public* confession and condemnation of such offence. In the transfer of membership from church

to church, we wish to see greater caution exercised. Though it be highly proper to admit members of sister churches to occasional communion, yet when persons remove from one place to another, and are permitted to live, for years, without removing their special church relation, experience has taught, that painful, if not incurable, difficulties are often the consequence —Where a member of a church is recommended to a sister church, he ought ever to be considered as belonging to the church recommending him, until received by the church to which he is recommended.

We lament, that those who profess the same faith, and subscribe the same covenant vows, should live like strangers; that so many sit at our communion tables, who are so ignorant of each other's real characters —It cannot be doubted, that if brethren would speak oftener one to another, in the spirit of meekness and christian love; if they would take more pains to become acquainted with each other's spiritual state; if incipient scandals and heresies were carefully watched and prayerfully attended to, before they become seated and obdurate; many difficulties in our churches would be prevented. The spirit of genuine gospel discipline in a church, will be in exact proportion to the brotherly love which exists among its members; and this will be greater or less, as familiar intercourse of hearts is cultivated or neglected. In this view, the benefits of frequent meetings for christian conference and social prayer, are too obvious to require particular mention.

In choosing officers of the church, particularly ministers, we beseech our brethren to be, in this day, peculiarly circumspect. If the interests of the church ever enforced on presbyters the apostolic injunction, "lay hands suddenly on no man;" we think the present state of the world makes it emphatic. We entreat our brethren of the several associations, not to licence candidates for the ministry, where there is the least ground of hesitancy, as to their want of the qualifications marked out in the epistles to Timothy and Titus. And as a farther check to novices, and a barrier against those preachers, who are deficient in learning, talents, professional study, soundness of doctrine, prudence,

vital religion, and purity of morals, we exhort destitute churches to invite no candidates with a view to settlement, but upon due and prayerful consideration, and obtaining the best advice in their power. We think experience has shown, that the employment of a great number of probationers, tends to confuse and divide a church and people. "In fixing, fix," and let a thorough trial be the ground of your approbation and call.

Uninspired men cannot preach acceptably to the same congregation for a series of years, without much study. And we think experience in New England has shown, that it is not for the spiritual interests of the church, that all ministers of the gospel should be itinerant and vagrant. Let them be supported in such a manner, as shall render them inexcusable for not devoting themselves wholly to their sacred work; and then if they are not faithful, and do not bring beaten oil to the sanctuary, complain to the proper board, and when regularly convicted of sloth, heresy, or scandal, withhold from them your confidence, and account them unworthy of the ministerial office. Under God, the interests of Zion do not more depend on any human means, than a learned, able, pious, and evangelical ministry.

Although there is not now that necessity for the office of deacon, which existed in the primitive church, the laws of the state making provision for the poor; still we think it highly proper, that every church should have a fund for charitable purposes; and, that there should be a voluntary collection, in all our churches, at the close of each sacramental communion, in order that further aid and comfort may occasionally be given to the poor of the "household of faith," at the discretion of the deacons; they, from time to time, rendering an account of their alms, and of the state of the fund, to the church. This would render them almoners of the church, which was originally their principal office.

We advise the churches to draw more closely the bonds of consociational union. Dr. Increase Mather informs us, that altho' the churches of New England originally assumed the name of Congregational, they disliked and disclaimed the name of Independent. The

reason, he says, why they assumed the above name, was an opinion, that a particular organized church has entire power, within itself, to manage the affairs of Christ's kingdom, and the holy discipline belonging to it, without a dependence on any superior power. His words are—"They revere synods and ecclesiastical councils, consisting of elders and brethren, sent as messengers of the churches, when want of peace or light shall call for their advice: But they esteem not stated councils or synods, with a juridical power, to be of divine institution. Nevertheless, we look upon reforming Presbyterians as our dear brethren."

Many affairs of the church, as the trial and ordination of pastors, the trial of scandalous and heretical ministers, on complaint, and the composing of differences between particular churches, seem to render consociations indispensable. And we apprehend, that the strict connexion of christians of the same faith, in one mystical body of Christ, requires, that unity of fellowship among them should be carried as far as possible. A closer union of churches would doubtless have an important tendency to promote their strength, peace, and safety; to purge out errors, to prevent schisms and separations, and to bring offending ministers to adequate censure.

We solicit your attention, christian brethren, to the various objects suggested in these pages. Let no one sit down supinely, in the belief, that nothing can be done for the revival of apostolic discipline in our churches. We are unquestionably called to the attempt: called by the commands of Christ, by the spirit of that gospel which we profess, by the solemn and portentous signs of the times in which we live. As a people, we are distinguished by unexampled privileges. The cry of our iniquities is, nevertheless, gone up to heaven. On every side are exhibited the painful proofs of our great depravity. In all our towns, how many families have no altar for God! How many hearts hate the gospel of his Son! How many mouths are full of cursing and bitterness, casting profane contempt upon God's name, and sabbath, and word, and worship, and people! The period is awful. From the midst of great events, unfolding rapidly on the theatre

of our world, the voice of Providence speaks emphatically to christians, *Rouze from your supineness; stand forth, disciples of Emanuel. Who is on the Lord's side?——Who?*

If the aspect of passing events does not mislead the serious observer; if the trumpet of prophecy does not give an uncertain sound; God is about to winnow his church, and to sever the chaff from the wheat. Already his fan seems to be in his hand, for this solemn work. Wo, then, to formal, slumbering christians! Wo to all who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; who have the *form*, without the *power*, of godliness. But, though the purging of the church involve its unworthy members, with its open enemies, in a tremendous overthrow; though the progress of this work shake every other kingdom into ruins; the foundation of Christ's kingdom standeth sure. There is nothing in these prospects to appal the heart that is fixed, trusting in God. Let us be sober, and watch unto prayer. "The strength of christians is the honor of the church. When men are inflamed with the love of God; live by a lively operative faith; set light by the profits and honors of the world; study to do good, abstain from the appearance of evil, and season all their actions with a sweet mixture of prudence, humility, zeal, and heavenly spirituality; Oh what an honor are they to their profession! what ornaments to the church!—The world would sooner believe, that the gospel is indeed a work of truth and power, if they could see more of its effects upon the hearts and lives of men." If all the members of our churches were really "one compacted phalanx, with the Bible in their hands, and Christ in their hearts, their prayers, as clouds of incense, going up before the throne, taking hold upon God's strength, and engaging Omnipotence to be our reward; what wonders might we not yet expect!"

Finally, brethren, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." While it is called to-day, let us hear the

voice of Him who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks–" Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Signed by order of the General Association,

AZEL BACKUS, Moderator.

New London, June 22, 1808.

In what sense the Scriptures are the word of God.

IT has been often asked, In what sense are the Scriptures the word of God?

This is a serious and important question, and deserves an answer; which in short is this:

The Scriptures are the word of God, as they were written by holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.—This observation applies to every part of the sacred volume, excepting what St. Paul says respecting celibacy, which he expressly declares he did not write under immediate inspiration.

The Bible is a history of facts, of conversations between God and man, between God and satan, between man and man. It is a history of great events, of miracles, of prophecies, of laws and their proper sanctions.

It is said by some, who profess a regard for the Scriptures, that all the Bible is not the word of God; and what is related to have been said by satan, and wicked men, have been produced as examples. If by this be meant, that these words for instance, " Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life," were spoken by satan and not by God, it is true; but how doth this, and a thousand other instances of what has been said by wicked men and devils, which are

related in the Bible, prove that the whole of that book was not given by inspiration? For this is what is meant by the Bible's being the word of God.

Moses was inspired to furnish a history of creation, to inform us what Lamech said to his wives, what satan said to God respecting Job, &c. And we have the evidence of divine declarations that the things were done and spoken as here related. Much of the Scriptures is a history of God's works, and the works and labors of men; and we may with as much propriety say that those are not the word of God, as the instances which have been mentioned.

To say that the whole of the Bible is not the word of God, because wicked men and devils said things which are there related, is very impertinent. It can amount to no more than saying, that God did not say what he informs us was spoken by this or the other person: But we have the evidence of inspiration, that every thing has been said and done which are related in the Scriptures, and by the very persons to whom those words and works are ascribed. This constitutes the Bible a revelation from God, or God's word.

From whence it follows, that the assertion which denies this, is false and dangerous. It is false, as it is a perversion of the expression, "*The word of God.*" It is dangerous, as it tends to diminish our confidence in the truth of the Bible.

Resolutions of the late pious Bishop Beveridge.

Concerning my Thoughts.

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to watch as much over the inward motions of my heart, as the outward actions of my life.

FOR, my heart, I perceive, is the womb in which all sin is first conceived, and from which, my Savior tells me, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, Mark vii. 21, 22. So that, as ever I

would prevent the commission of these sins in my life, I must endeavor to hinder their conception in my heart, following the wise man's counsel, to keep my heart with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life, Prov. iv. 23. Neither is this the only reason, why I should set so strict a watch over my heart, because sinful thoughts lead to sinful acts; but because the thoughts themselves are sinful, yea, the very first-born of iniquity; which, though man cannot pry into or discover, yet the all-seeing God knows and observes, and remembers them, as well as the greatest actions of all my life. And Oh! what wicked and profane thoughts have I formerly entertained, not only against God, but against Christ, by questioning the justice of his laws, and doubting of the truth of his revelation, so as to make both his Life and Death of none effect to me! Which, that they may never be laid to my charge hereafter, I humbly beseech God to pardon and absolve me from them, and to give me grace, for the remainder of my life, to be as careful of thinking, as of doing well, and as fearful of offending him in my heart, as of transgressing his laws in my life and conversation. To this end,

Resolution II.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to stop every thought, at its first entering into my heart, and to examine it whence it comes, and whither it tends.

SO soon as ever any new thought begins to bubble in my soul, I am resolved to examine what stamp it is of, whether it spring from the pure fountain of living waters, or the polluted streams of my own affections; as also, which way it tends, or takes its course, towards the ocean of happiness, or the pit of destruction. And the reason of this my resolution, I draw from the experience I have had of the devil's temptations, and the working of my own corruptions; by which I find, that there is no sin I am betrayed into, but what takes its rise from my inward thoughts. These are the tempters that first present some pleasing object to my view, and then bias my understanding, and prevent my will, to comply with the suggestion. [illegible], though the spirit of God is pleased to dart a

beam into my heart at the same time, and shew me the odious and dangerous effects of such thoughts; yet, I know not how or why, I find a prevailing suggestion within, that tells me, it is but a thought, and that so long as it goes no farther, it cannot do me much hurt. Under this specious color and pretence, I secretly persuade myself to dwell a little longer upon it; and finding my heart pleased and delighted with its natural issue, I give it a little farther indulgence, till, at last, my desire breaks out into a flame, and will be satisfied with nothing less than the enjoyment of the object it is exercised upon. And what water can quench such a raging fire, as is thus kindled by the devil, and blown up by the bellows of my own inordinate affections, which the more I think of, the more I increase the flame? How nearly, therefore, does it concern me to take up this resolution, of setting a constant watch and guard at the door of my heart, that nothing may enter in, without a strict examination? Not as if I could examine every particular thought that arises in my heart, for by that means I should do nothing else but examine my thoughts without intermission. But this I must do: Whensoever I find any thought that bears the face or appearance of sin, I must throw it aside with the utmost abhorrence; And when it comes in disguise, as the devil under Samuel's mantle, or when it is a thought I never conceived before, and know not but it may be bad, as well as good; then, before I suffer it to settle upon my spirits, I must examine as well as I can, whether it be sent from heaven or hell, and what message it comes about, and what will be the issue of it. And thus, by Divine assistance, I shall let nothing into my heart, but what will bring me nearer to my God, and set me at a greater distance from the evil and punishment of sin.

THE following is an ingenious paraphrase of Erasmus, on this passage of scripture, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it."

"How strait is the gate, how narrow the way, that leadeth to life! In the way, nothing is to be found that

flatters the flesh, but many things opposite to it, poverty, fasting, watching, injuries, chastity, sobriety. And as for the gate, it receives none that are swollen with the glory of this life; none that are elated and lengthened out with pride; none that are distended with luxury; it does not admit those that are laden with the fardels of riches, nor those that drag along with them the other implements of the world. None can pass through it but naked men, who are stripped of all worldly lusts, and who, having put off their bodies, are, as it were, emaciated into spirits, which is the reason that it is sought after by so few."

Poetry.

The Mysteries of Providence.

GOD moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning Providence,
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain. COWPER.